

Hey, Talk to Me!

The Doctor *Is* in the House

Disability and Health Care

Having a disability does not mean a person is not healthy or that he or she cannot be healthy. Being healthy means the same thing for all of us—getting and staying well so we can lead full, active lives. That means having the tools and information to make healthy choices and knowing how to prevent illness.

Having a disability does not mean you can't be healthy.

People with disabilities must be able to get the care and services they need to help them be healthy.

Disability and Health Care

For people with disabilities, it also means knowing that health problems related to a disability can be treated. These problems, also called secondary conditions, can include pain, depression, and a greater risk for certain illnesses.

Disability and Health Care

To be healthy, people with disabilities require health care that meets their needs as a whole person, not just as a person with a disability. Most people with or without disabilities can stay healthy by learning about and living healthy lifestyles.

You Need to Stay Healthy

People with disabilities need health care and health programs for the same reasons anyone else does—to stay well, active, and a part of the community.

Keeping Healthy

Keeping yourself healthy is the best way to avoid getting sick. Four important things you can do are:

- ☐ rest
- ☐ eat well
- ☐ exercise.
- ☐ BE PROACTIVE ABOUT YOUR HEALTH

Rest

- ☐ **Rest.** Don't skimp on rest! Too little sleep can cause some serious problems, like:
 - ☐ You may be more likely to catch colds and other minor illnesses. Your body cannot fight off germs as well when you are tired and run-down.
 - ☐ You are more likely to feel stressed or become depressed.
 - ☐ You may have a hard time staying awake in class.
 - ☐ You may have trouble concentrating on papers and tests.
 - ☐ So, be sure to get about 8 to 9 hours of sleep a night whenever you can.

Eat Well.

- ☐ Vending machine food or fast-food may be quick and cheap when you are busy and on a budget but eating well is important.
- ☐ Try to remember to eat fruits and vegetables every day (your goal should be 5 a day).
- ☐ Eat lean meats, fish, and poultry. Eat foods high in calcium, like low-fat dairy products.
- ☐ Limit junk food or foods with a lot of fat, sugar, and salt.
- ☐ Limit sugary drinks such as pop, juice, sweetened teas or coffees, and sport drinks.

Exercise

☐ **Exercise.** An important part of staying healthy is getting enough exercise. There are 3 basic types of exercise, and ideally everyone should do all 3.

☐ **Aerobic exercise** strengthens your heart and lungs. These are activities like biking, running, fast walking, swimming, active dancing, and rowing.

☐ **Strengthening exercise** tones and builds muscles and bone mass. You can do this by doing sit-ups, push-ups, and leg lifts, or by working out with weights or resistance bands.

☐ **Stretching exercise**, like yoga, improves your flexibility or range of motion.

But, Most Importantly... Be Proactive; Stay Healthy

☐ Individuals with disabilities typically have health issues that are more complex and greater in number

☐ Make time for routine check-ups when you're well. Don't wait till you get sick

For Those of You in College

Even though you're in college your pediatrician still cares about your health. You can call your pediatrician any time you have questions. If you live nearby you can continue to make appointments, or come in when you are home on break. You may even want to see your pediatrician for a physical before you start school (your school might actually require it).

Source: Health Care for College Students (Copyright © 2007 American Academy of Pediatrics, Updated 2/07)

Leading a Long and Healthy Life

Although people with disabilities sometimes have a harder time getting and staying healthy than people without disabilities, there are things we can all do to get and stay healthy.

Tips for leading a long and healthy life:

- ☐ Be physically active every day.
- ☐ Eat healthy foods in healthy portions.
- ☐ Don't get too much sun.
- ☐ Get regular checkups.
- ☐ Don't smoke.
- ☐ Use medicines wisely.
- ☐ If you drink alcoholic beverages, drink in moderation.
- ☐ Get help for substance abuse.
- ☐ Stay in touch with family and friends.
- ☐ If you need help, talk with your health care professional.

What your Health Care Professional Should Do

- ☐ See the whole person, not just the disability.
- ☐ Speak *directly with the person with a disability, rather than through a third party.*
- ☐ Speak with adults as adults, and children as children.
- ☐ Ask the person with a disability if he or she needs any help. Do not assume help is needed.

What your Health Care Professional Should Do

- ☐ Be aware and patient of the extra time it might take a person with a disability to speak or act.
- ☐ Respect what a person with a disability *can do*.
See the ability in disability.
- ☐ Understand that not having access to work, school, health care, or fun things do can cause more problems than a disability itself
- ☐ Be the person who makes a difference.

What You Can Do

There are also many things you can do to make sure you are getting the best possible health care:

- ☐ Know your body, how you feel when you're well and when you're not.
- ☐ Talk openly with your health care professional about your concerns.
- ☐ Find out who the best health care professionals are in your area to meet your needs.
- ☐ Check to be sure you can get into your health care professional's office and that he or she has the staff and equipment you need.

The Importance of Good Communication

- ☐ Everything in medicine is increasing in complexity, depth and scope
- ☐ Therefore the importance of optimal communication between patient and provider is increasing as well
- ☐ This is especially critical when a patient has chronic, often complex health concerns
- ☐ This is especially important when many providers are involved

Talking to Your Doctor

(or any health care provider)*

- ☐ You should be present for virtually all discussions involving *you*
- ☐ There is no “downside” to talking directly to your doctor
- ☐ There is no “downside” (to you) of your doctor talking directly *to you*
 - *Some doctors may feel they do not have the time*
 - *Some doctors may feel you would not understand*
- ☐ What do you do if the above happens?

* The term “doctor” will mean your primary care physician; “health care provider” will mean anyone on the health care team

Talking to Your Doctor

(or any health care provider)

- ☐ Explain to your doctor (in a nice way) that you will be making most of the decisions about your health care and treatment options
- ☐ Arrange for a longer consultation period
 - *Try to do this in advance*
 - *Reschedule if necessary, emergencies do happen*
- ☐ Ask if you may record the consultations if you feel that would help you
- ☐ Explain to your parents that you would like to be the person “spoken to”

Be Prepared

- ☐ Think through your concerns before you visit your health care professional.
- ☐ Bring your health records with you.
- ☐ Take a friend with you, if you're concerned you might not remember all your questions and all the answers.
- ☐ Get it in writing. Write down, or have someone write down for you, what is said by the health care professional.
- ☐ Ask for help finding more information through materials like brochures, or at specific web pages on the Internet.

Health Literacy and You!

- ❑ What is Health Literacy?
 - "The capacity to obtain, process and understand basic health information and services needed to make appropriate health decisions" *
- ❑ Whose responsibility is your Health Literacy?
 - Mostly yours
 - With the help of your health care providers

*Selden CR, et al., eds *Institute of Medicine Health Literacy: A prescription to End Confusion*. Bethesda, MD: National Institutes of Health, US Department of Health and Human Services; 2004.v-viii

Health Care Professionals...

- ❑ Are responsible for treating the *Whole Person*, not just the disability
 - After all, aren't you *more* than just a person with a disability

Health Care Transitions

- ❑ Some of you may still be under the care of your pediatrician
- ❑ It was the goal of *Healthy People 2010* that all young people with special health care needs would receive the services needed to make necessary transitions to all aspects of adult life, including:
 - health care
 - Work
 - independent living
- ❑ There is still lots to do

What Health Care Professionals Can Do

- ☐ Give each patient—including people with disabilities—the information needed to live a long and healthy life
- ☐ Listen and respond to the patient's health concerns
- ☐ Communicate clearly and directly with the patient
- ☐ Take the time needed to meet the patient's health care needs

The Doctor's Office the correct and incorrect way....

- Here are videos of the correct and incorrect ways in which the doctor and patient (you!!!) should interact with their doctor

Doctor's Office

First, the incorrect way...

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eb3xsismYJc>

Doctor's Office

Now, a much better way...

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=32iOb6qo7co>

Good References

- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The 2005 Surgeon General's Call to Action to Improve the Health and Wellness of Persons with Disabilities: Calling You to Action. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Surgeon General, 2005.
- Office on Disability U.S. Department of Health and Human Services 200 Independence Avenue, S.W. Washington, D.C. 20201 Telephone: 202-401-5844 www.hhs.gov/od


